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Author: Julio Alcántara

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Correspondence: Julio Alcántara, e: julio.alcantara@egs.edu.

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On oblivion

Julio Alcántara¹

Abstract

A reflection on Jorge Luis Borges' *Funes the Memorious* (in *Fictions*, 1944) helps us to understand the meaning of memory and perception by which a metaphysical standpoint emerges from the side of Giorgio Agamben, Gottfried W. Leibniz, Martin Heidegger and Indian philosophy where the essence of reality may be triggered by a force hidden in human thinking as well.

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Jorge Luis Borges wrote *Funes the Memorious* in *Fictions* (originally published in 1944). Beyond being only a mysterious story for its topic and the way it was written, the content provides some possible insights about how we could define thinking and remembering. There is also a description about it in the fiction: "To think is to ignore (or forget) differences, to generalize, to abstract. In the teeming world of Ireneo Funes there was nothing but particulars – and they were virtually *immediate* particulars".² Thinking in Borges' text is an act that happens when humans abstract or generalize things. The phenomena of perception and recognition do not express in themselves the human ability of thinking, which is, in fact, a paradox, since one should think first in order to comprehend such distinctions.

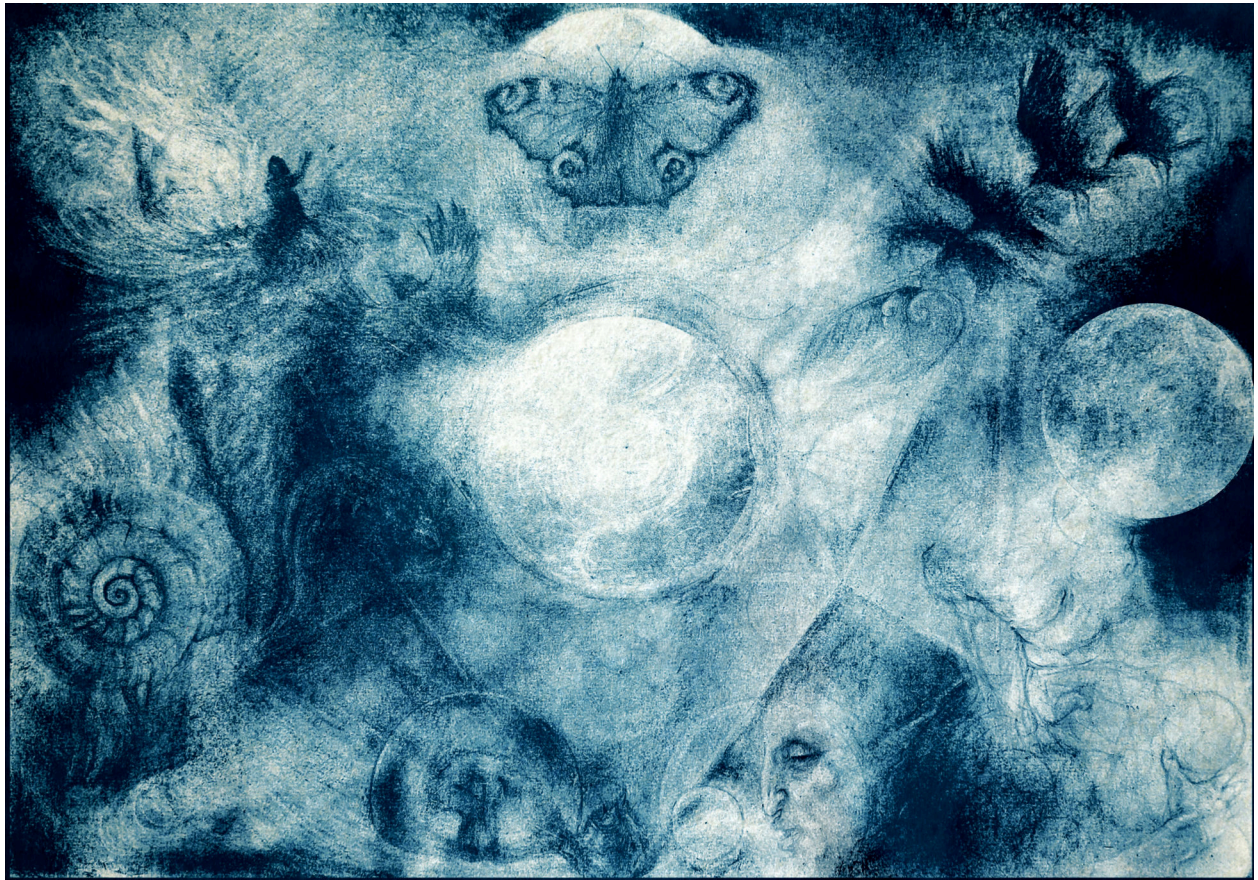
Ireneo Funes could remember everything. For him every moment was an entire experience full of minute details. He can even recall particularities of flavors, smells, and noises. This circumstance stimulated him to the point of being entirely absorbed in such depths. The present time was, perhaps, so saturated with different elements that a moment was part of a splendor that could not be experienced without attachments. It was probably that his lack of normal attention brought him problems with other people, due to the fact that he could not follow just one movement stream of the surroundings. "Have you seen that drop of water, Funes?" And Funes could have even seen the multiple sides of that simple detail, everyone of which was, of course, valuable in itself, but also restricted to merely one perspective.

Funes could not believe in the identity of names, which was an imposed normalization in the changing composition of a dog or a window, for instance. The dog at 3:15 looking through the door could not possibly be the same as the "same" dog at 16:45 haunting a sound. He was surprised also by his face in front of the mirror, which was always a different one.

He was able to reconstruct every dream, every daydream he had ever had. Two or three times he had reconstructed an entire day; he had never once erred or flattered, but each reconstruction had itself taken an entire day. "I, myself, alone, have more memories than all mankind since the world began", he said to me. And also: "My

¹European Graduate School, Visp and EHESS, Paris. I thank Alexis Rivera for the editorial corrections of the article's first draft.

²Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 137.



“Oblivion,” by Pilar Sekho, based on Julio Alcántara’s visual concept for this article. License: CC-BY.

dreams are like other people’s waking hours”.³ Instead of being involved in one stream of perception through the events in a dream, he could grasp dreams’ details and, I would say, he could perceive the vast richness of being awake to all *genera* of the world.

Furthermore, Borges wrote:

The truth was, Funes remembered not only every leaf of every tree in every patch of forest, but every time he had perceived or imagined that leaf. He resolved to reduce every one of his past days to some seventy thousand recollections, which he would then define by numbers. Two considerations dissuaded him: the realization that the task was interminable, and the realization that it was pointless.⁴

Funes had to forget, because there was no option. Otherwise, he could find himself stuck trying to recollect every other element of each changing dynamic. Not even in his entire life could he achieve to remind only his past, since two lives are necessary to remind one based on Borges’ text. At once the counting was a useless task: memories are important but just when connected to being present.

³*Ibid.*, 136.

⁴*Ibid.*

Franz Brentano emphasized the perspective towards the past when living the present, since awareness of present experience is disputable in rational terms. “In the case of memory I do not appear to myself as one who has earlier experienced something as present, but rather as one who now experiences something as past”.⁵ Memory’s recollection is an *aporia* due to the fact that when gathering perceptions, this process is not by nature identical to its stimuli and it is attributable to an abstraction of this phenomenon. In the case that perceptions have already a form, stimuli would be first constrained to human condition and, secondly, their order would imply a mediated process of perception.

Perception is the first faculty of the soul which is occupied with our ideas. It is also the first and simplest idea, which we receive by reflection. Thought signifies often the mind’s working upon its own ideas, when it acts and considers a thing with a certain degree of voluntary attention: but in what we call *perception*, the mind is ordinarily purely passive, not being able to avoid perceiving what it actually perceives.⁶

It is conceivable that perception is an individual form of thinking based on the intrinsic interconnection between perception and thinking in the sense that there is no thought without perception and perception without thinking in human beings. While the doors of perception are the channels to interact with the surroundings, thinking provides them with distinctions. The adequate understanding of a perception is necessary in the development of thinking i.e. a partial manner of thinking can inhibit the performance of perception. The bottom-up and top-down psychological and psychiatric pathologies caused by unbalanced perceptual behavior come from these dynamics between perception and mind given physiological and morphological pathogenesis and an unbalanced development of the mind focused on conscious behavior from thoughts and emotions to social interactions.

While being present enables us to perceive, remembrance grounds the stability of phenomena. Hence, experience would be like a wave composed of tiny past perceptions or drops that gather together giving rise to a composition whose form unravels the present time. The movement of the water drops realizes the form of their wave, manifesting the interconnection of memories with present perceptions: one perception can trigger past and future ones besides the ones belonging to the context, imagination, and the whole possibilities of the universe. The present time is neither the past drops, nor incoming ones, but the material composite, which is just an outcome of an ever present non-action of the hidden force of life. The subjective sense of temporal dynamics comes from the successive dynamics of perception, but time itself is pure presence and a bare causality in phenomenal interactions. Temporal coordinates of human perception are just general directions, which do not express the whole content of experience. This is why there are many representations related to human perceptions and sensations of the present, for humans perceive a vast range of possibilities, counting as well the ones that are irrational or illogical given the assumption of an order of succession.

A basic assumption creates its world: we can take one of these hypotheses to imagine another whole interaction, which will be logical, but based on other groundings, since what is logical or not, it is related to its substance, not its representation. Such a substance is implied when

⁵Franz Brentano, *Philosophical Investigations on Space, Time and the Continuum*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 50.

⁶G. W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1916), 135.

establishing some attribute to the nature of things by a common affirmation. There are some people as well who truly believe something, performing a life based on a particular idea, which is experienced as reality itself. Both cases materialize what they imply, but there are also unaccountable possibilities. In the case of human beings we should first acknowledge that humans bring unexpected elements to reality. They exist and act, expressing a free ground from the given. The freedom of ground is an intrinsic structure in the understanding of what is the meaning of being an aware creature. This freedom constitutes an unconscious constitution of humans, grounding why we argue when somebody has forgotten or cannot recognize what is to be here and acting consequently.

Oblivion is a necessary *topos* of conscious life, while other details coming from the material interactions of the body and other perspectives work for the causal structure of reality. Humans have no choice regarding whether to forget or not, since attention itself makes oblivion possible. Oblivion does not mean that we are not determined by our past. It means that our past perceptions are not fully and always present in our thinking, not even some of the current perceptions.

Nevertheless, the fiction of a soul which animates different bodies in turn, without concerning itself in one of these bodies with that which happens to it in the other, is one of those fictions contrary to the nature of things which arise from the imperfect notions of philosophers, as space without body and body without motion, and which disappear when one penetrates a little deeper; for you must know that each soul perseveres all its preceding impressions, and cannot divide itself equally in the manner just mentioned; the future in each substance is perfectly united to the past; this is what constitutes the identity of the individual.⁷

Then we forget two types of things that determine us: first some perceptions that we feel, but to which we cannot be attentive, and, second, some perceptions that were present to us, but which we could not retain partially or entirely in our minds. Memory is also constrained by how the brain processes information and how we focus emotionally our attention on elements of experience. Attention is to be focused on one particular thing, not on the entire present interaction.

We must consider that we think of many things at a time, but we attend only to the thoughts which are most distinct, and the process cannot go otherwise, for if we should attend to all, we would have to think attentively of an infinite number of things at the same time, all of which we feel and which make an impression of all our senses. I say even more: there remains something of all our past thoughts, and none can ever be wholly effaced.⁸

The past remains in different or modified manners. We are creative while remembering, which enforces the idea that what matters is connected to the current changing of the given, since we modify in a way what we have experienced. The analysis of this phenomenon provides the possibility to think about the creative process of the human remembering process and to express *the structure of the possible in itself*. As in Bartleby's case of Herman Melville's *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street* interpreted by Giorgio Agamben:

Remembrance restores the possibility to the past, making what happened incomplete

⁷*Ibid.*, 114-115.

⁸*Ibid.*, 113.

and completing what never was. Remembrance is neither what happened nor what did not happen but rather, their potentialization, their becoming possible once again. It is in this sense that Bartleby calls the past into question, re-calling it –not simply to redeem what was, to make it exist again but, more precisely, to consign it once again to potentiality, to the indifferent truth of the tautology. “I would prefer not to” is the *restitution in integrum* of possibility, which keeps possibility suspended between occurrence and nonoccurrence, between the capacity to be and the capacity not to be.⁹

This act of suspension as it was approached by Agamben emphasizes the possibility of being opened before the stream of the possible, but Bartleby is, at his very simple predicament, the *materialization* of a possibility, which does not face the problem of life as a whole, even if he enacts the paradox of being free. Bartleby could let his possibility open in cultural sense, but not ontologically, since he was constrained to the same determinations, which finally caused the materialization of such denial even as a constitutive attempt. The core of such paradox is the polemic possibility of illumination affirmed by Plato in the *Republic*. It is polemic because starting from that affirmation there cannot be a discussion about whether one sees the idea of the Good or not, or even if one acts or interprets as pretending to understand it: it will be affirmed beyond any constriction of any shadow. This is a dispossession of the self by bringing the transcendence as the embodiment of supreme light. In comparison with Bartleby, the enlightened one, enacting an undeniable unity, affirms his own possibility to achieve the whole by being aware that embodiment is an ontological determination.

Thus, culture expands our world’s comprehension, constraining simultaneously our attention by normalization of common forms of behavior. We remember collectively by means of cultural expressions such as symbols and as a behavioral process of communication, while creating altogether an integral insight about human experience. One of the most notable cases is what happened with the aforementioned idea of being enlightened. In our epoch it is approached as something desirable by the ones who have gotten some understanding of life, but in reality there is no possible decision about it if we take its meaning seriously. Being enlightened, if there is a chance to achieve such a state, has nothing to do with striving for it: it is pure embodiment, which denies any possible becoming, because it is a lightning that crosses the changing structure of reality.

1.1 Being a local point of reference in the universe

No individuated entity has the entire attention before the given. It is just attentive in its locality, where it is situated. This does not mean a lack of attention, due to the fact that from this locality comes the light to *configure* things as *something*. To have a point of reference constrains the plasticity of imagination by tracing a given structure, which will work as an inner model of representation. This phenomenon gives us the chance to represent entities while changing their form since entities and our ability to configure them were not given originally in its entirety. This becoming of every human occurs by force in every entity, dissolving any privilege of one over the other. The hidden nature of thinking reconfigures the given.

In the case of self-attention, one needs the attention of other humans to be more deeply

⁹Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities*, (Stanford: University Press, 1999), 267.

attentive of oneself. Some features of ourselves are expressed in our dynamic with other sentient and self-conscious entities: one knows oneself, firstly, as a part of the human genre by interactional similarities and, secondly, as a different entity by the recognition of distinctions between these particular resemblances. Funes' ability is recognizable by its distinctiveness in regard to other types and by analogy with what may be considered as common attention. He needs other humans to be recognized as Funes, but this contradiction would exist even if nobody could perceive what he is capable of. There would be no Funes without the human misconception of him. Why is it a misunderstanding? Because even Borges exaggerated quantitatively his remembrance while saying almost nothing about his qualitative experience, which was certainly of another type. The perplexity of Bartleby and Funes is a reaction before the given, which multiplies the predicates of the essence¹⁰, but what makes it intelligible is also a *mystery*. It is understandable that some philosophers asserted the no-essentiality of the given due to the fact that it is transformable at its core. The inessentiality means being not reducible to any form as well. Then, the transformation and the irreducibility of the given somehow produce a logical structure whose partial intelligibility is our human means of understanding, if it is possible to say "logical" and "structure" in such a case.

For Funes there was a predicament between letting his ability force him to be the way he was for his entire life or altogether forgetting to live a more or less human life. He was struggling with what he could grasp from his perceptions: "... Funes could continually perceive the quiet advances of corruption, of tooth decay, of weariness. He saw – he notices – the progress of death, of humidity. He was the solitary, lucid spectator of a multiform, momentaneous, and almost unbearable precise world".¹¹ In this expression Borges seems to hesitate between the joyful richness of perceiving every single detail and the boring repetitiveness of the structure given in the universe. Perhaps there is a paradox in Borges' thinking, because the richness of perception in its highest possibility, such as the act of watching a different self in front of the mirror every time, is invaded by a constant perceptual dynamic that renders this experience unbearable indeed.

The sameness of such a dynamic is the hidden resistance of the given. We can perceive it as different forms and determinations, but when we have just a human perspective towards the given, which makes ungraspable some features of it, it is just recognizable as an inner dynamic of thinking, which implies the unified field when being expressed. "But it is always through determined paths, and never without a reason or by means of the imaginary principle of perfect indifference or equilibrium, in which some would make the essence of freedom to consist; as if one could determine himself without a subject, and even against very subject, and go directly against the entire *prevalence* of impressions and propensities".¹²

Humans face such a realm through the glasses of a reflection and a mask. The paradox of this hidden structure exists since the determinations provide us an intelligible field, but, at the same time, these determinations give us the possibility to transcend them. Therefore a determination to change the forms makes the cases of Funes and Bartleby weak acts of *poiesis*. The input received from our perceptions cannot exhaust our capacities, because no perception includes the dimension where all perceptions are possible; to stop in one, to elucidate a reduction to a simple

¹⁰"Essence" is understood here as a metaphysical constitution.

¹¹Borges, *op.cit.*, 136.

¹²Leibniz, *op.cit.*, 203.

composition of elements would deny the potentiality of transformation, which is necessary. Even if these two characters realized a unique possibility, I wonder if they could not perceive beyond their determinations or without perceiving the unified field seen by Zarathustra, Buddha or Adi Shankara. In any case, the given makes possible all reactions to it.

1.2 The hidden force of thinking in the dynamics of the unknown field of life

Borges implicitly affirmed two opposite things about being present: first, thinking inhibits us from being here and now by situating ourselves in an overview of phenomena; second, Funes could be present in the highest sense, because he could perceive and remember more details than any other human being. Nonetheless, what kind of presence can embody such ability? We can discuss endlessly that humans are not normally in the present and I would agree, but Funes could not be here and now either, since he was containing his huge capacity of remembering, while perceiving another world. He could not be in the present moment and it is mandatory to be oneself. This contention expresses in its core the human condition by displaying our capacity of understanding beyond what it is doable in human terms: “The power of perceiving we call *understanding*: it includes the perception of ideas, the perception of the signification of signs, and finally, the perception of the agreement or disagreement existing between any of our ideas”.¹³

The force of thinking is what leads us as a determination beyond, paradoxically, our own capacity. It is from this phenomenon that human efforts to disentangle our condition have originated, since the colossal potentiality of thinking intrudes in our biological condition as an impossible *chimera* to solve or as a fantasy just related to other possibilities of human life, not the *realistic* life. But if we were to reflect on the historical process that has brought us now, we could realize that there are many gaps of oblivion among the moments of history, since every present in our history has recreated its past and future: human conditions of an epoch are not identical to their representation. Thus, this representation is mixed with the complexities of life, which do not exist mainly for the sake of being symbolized in a community. We have two branches in such respect: events rearticulated by the present time and events without the awareness of the present. Of course it goes far of the conceivable when we include our cultural and constitutive ignorance of the given.

Funes’ world is a different one due to the fact that there is no possible common understanding with him, but symbolical. In this sense, symbols as represented reflections of thinking and perception enable human beings to have the chance of rearticulating their meaning with different mindsets and experiences. This is another dimension in the process of reinterpretation of history. Multiple worlds are connected synchronically and diachronically through symbols where their last irreducible element for humans is given phenomena. Symbol means an irreducible structure of meaning where the latter is the valuable connection to a given perception. Almost everything can be symbolized, but not everything has such a performance, since there is an unexplainable power already contained in some symbols to open different dimensions of awareness. I imagine Plato was referencing this in the process of recalling while learning Ideas, because these symbols have such a profound intelligibility that it gathers many characteristics of the given. Even though the comprehension of Ideas is beyond logical explanation, their grounding *arché* conveys

¹³Leibniz, *ibid.*, 177.

a permanent performance into reality as an expression of the perfect composition by which phenomena are, simultaneously, built and intelligible, e.g. from the Idea of the sky and an apple to a shepherd. Therefore they perform the act of the universe, which is also unknown in its mutability and in its relation to us as self-conscious beings.

Multiple worlds, which can be organic entities like animals, humans or plants, compose our reality. Every single entity with the possibility of interaction has a world which is a complete apprehension of one singularity over totality. The local composition of singularities is realized by other singularities surrounding it: identity is the limit and outcome of local interaction. Our world captures other worlds but it does not finish them in our understanding, since there are things that we experience without knowing it and things we do not experience, because they have an ungraspable dynamic for us due to their phenomenal features.

I do not know but that more confidence is necessary to deny that anything goes on in the soul of which we are not conscious; for that which is perceivable must be composed of parts which are not so, nothing can spring into being at once, thought no more than motion. In short, it is as if some one asked today how we know the insensible corpuscles.¹⁴

A wave compound of infinite drops of water in different temporalities exemplifies how the insensible corpuscles work in relation to the body: the perception of a phenomenon manifests the actual state of its development while its parts could remain hidden unless they are distinguished. On the one hand, we do perceive neither the complete composition of an object from human perceptual scope, nor the full phenomenal features of an object coexist in one phenomenal dimension. On the other hand, the self-consciousness of a human being is constrained by the current dynamics of the body and it can be extended so far as the interactions of the senses enabled the sustainment of its constitution: I am conscious of my actual inner bodily dynamics without including some of its parts not working for its preservation, since there are organs and parts of the body of which I am not aware. Furthermore, there is no chance I could be sensory aware of my cellular dynamics, much less of my quantum interactions. Nevertheless, all phenomenal dimensions of reality from quanta of energy and cells to bodies and composites are, permanently, in movement. The moving principle of reality is always active. Active means present.

Action is no more connected with the soul than with the body, a state without thought in the soul and an absolute repose in the body appearing to me equally contrary to nature, and without example in the world. A substance once in action, will be so always, for all the impressions remain and are merely mingled with other new ones. Striking a body, we arouse therein or determine rather an infinite number of vortices as in a liquid, for at bottom every solid has a degree of liquidity and every liquid a degree of solidity, and there are no means of ever stopping entirely these internal vortices. Now we may believe that if the body is never at rest, the soul, which corresponds to it, will never be without perception either.¹⁵

Humans interact with movements of movements in a concatenation creating the world in a universe with no apparent original reason. It is its *arché*, principle, origin, but it seems that it is a force that transforms materiality, where self-consciousness seems to be part of the elements

¹⁴Leibniz, *ibid.*, 118.

¹⁵Leibniz, *ibid.*, 111-112.

and part of the constitutive substance moving everything. Its core is the hidden structure of the given and the ungraspable *topos* of the unknown surrounding us, since the body and the mind have always motion with and without our awareness. Thence, some contemporary philosophers have tried to comprehend the principle that sustains and forms the visible with alienated forms, which has been misconceived and has created more dogmas than understanding, causing our epoch to have a lack of vision about this hidden principle. The problem has been that the essence of the given was related to the ancient topic in the way in which it was discussed in the past. Then this content has been almost forgotten or just limited to the history of concepts, since an implicit idea of our times is that the meaning of symbols evolves diachronically by our will. This situation has caused that we have not recreated other possibilities of expressing the exceptional case of some species with the capacity to transform the universe by their self-consciousness, in which the inner force that actualizes the given is also hidden by oblivion.

Freedom of thinking the unknown as the source of the visible, which implies freedom of being before reality, is at stake and it is what must be reconfigured according to our times. Otherwise humans will accept the imposition of present conditions as a rule or even as the way things truly are. “Western logic finally becomes logistics, whose irresistible development has meanwhile brought forth the electronic brain, whereby man’s nature and essence is adapted and fitted into the barely noticed Being of beings that appears in the nature of technology”.¹⁶ This time the assumption of the present alienation is reinforced: the symbolic representation of phenomena have become their masked forms or their true nature under the idea of a technical measurement of things in order to exist, i. e. covering the interactions with phenomena by a *praxis of technical measurement through naming* without teleology, which is certainly a misconception. On the one hand, praxis is the outcome of every human activity, even the contemplative ones. On the other hand, all genera of names from technical to poetical are human means to interact with phenomena, not phenomena themselves.

This transmutation of human ideals into symbolic names has modified human values into property and human work into merchandise. Another example is the idea of needing a name to understand our epoch, an epoch that presumably has to have a name to be, because without it there would be a lack of intelligibility. The icons of our epoch are *materialized forms of stolen nature*¹⁷, where only few humans embody human dignity and the rest receive merely its icon to be worshipped. When the current hierarchy uses all perceivable forms to subject the others, the unknown becomes one of the last efforts to battle against the destruction of human dignity. Capitalism is just one possible expression of symbolic representation of value in the case of work and production. The revolution of the inessentiality of the given is against the *representation* of all value. We have fallen on one side of the dimension of intelligibility by forgetting the inessentiality when conceiving the free grounding of our understanding. Martin Heidegger tried to solve this query by thinking it as the abyss of being human.

While surpassing being in projecting its world, Dasein must surpass itself in order, from this height, to be able to understand *itself* as groundless. Its ungrounded character, however, does not lend itself to dialectic or to psychological analysis. The appearance of the groundless in grounding transcendence is instead the primordial

¹⁶Martin Heidegger, *What is called Thinking?* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1968), 238.

¹⁷‘Materialized forms of stolen nature’ signify representational illusions that impose a false nature over phenomena.

‘move’ which freedom makes with us. It is the move whereby freedom ‘gives us to understand’ – as part of what it means to be contained in a world – that, the more primordially the contents of the world are grounded, the more readily the heart of Dasein can find its selfhood in dealing with the world. The confusion and abuse of reasons are, then, only ‘overcome’ in factual existing; they are never eliminated.¹⁸

There is a phenomenological approach to the inessentiality of the grounding, which, even if it is never suppressed, it is surpassed in factual terms through existence. Why is the inessentiality of the grounding never suppressed? Because what makes the world, what it is, is hidden in the things presented as presence before our thinking. Thus, thinking thinks what it is in its presence while being hidden by the same phenomenon as well. We do not know yet what is to think. Even if we name ourselves as thinking living things, we have not learned to think, said Heidegger, because we go deep into what is to think, when we think by ourselves, but what gives us to think is that we do not think in this epoch. We do not think given that we have forgotten what is to be here. Why have we forgotten it? Because what enables us to think comes from a subtraction and we are the sign, which results of such being driven by this enigma:

What must be thought about, turns away from man. It withdraws from him. But how can we have the least knowledge of something that withdraws from the beginning, how can we even give it a name? Whatever withdraws, refuses arrival. But – withdrawing is not nothing. Withdrawal is an event. In fact, what withdraws may even concern and claim man more essentially than anything present that strikes and touches him. Being struck by actuality is what we like to regard as constitutive of the actuality of the actual. However, in being struck by what is actual, man may be debarred precisely from what concerns and touches him – touches him in the surely mysterious way of escaping him by its withdrawal. The event of withdrawal could be what is most present in all our present, and so infinitely exceed the actuality of everything actual.¹⁹

Heidegger thinks this enigma as something that is perhaps more present than the things presented to us, since it gives in some sense the entire value to the comprehension of the given. Therefore we return again to the same problem, which is that the inessentiality of grounding is a radical unknown dimension, because we simply perform what it is enabled from that possibility. The event that makes us what we are has already happened. Deconstructing it could be meaningless, since all forms of knowledge are based on that event of deprivation. Which possible trace shall we follow when all traces are an outcome from the same source and when we use such traces for different tasks? Through the transmutation of the unknown into a form of knowledge, which is only representable by a denial of known forms, we can grasp an atmosphere of being present by transforming our surroundings and ourselves into alien entities, being surrounded by *das Unheimliche*, the uncanny. Thus life merges by itself.

I depart from the idea that by doing nothing we allow living things, including us, to reinforce their sources. As Alain Badiou said in his *Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art* (2008) about the source of inexistence against the imposition of current normalization made by what he calls Empire:

¹⁸Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Reasons*, (Northwestern: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 129.

¹⁹Heidegger, *What is called Thinking?*, 8–9.

13. Today art can only be made from the starting point of that which, as far as the Empire is concerned, doesn't exist. Through its abstraction, art renders this inexistence visible. This is what governs the formal principle of every art: the effort to render visible to everyone that which for the Empire (and so by extension for everyone, though from a different point of view), doesn't exist.²⁰

The duality seen by Badiou between visibility and invisibility is approached in another scale with the unknown, since it is, first, the field where we actually are, and it brings into our awareness that which escapes all time from our normalized perception. It seems that there is a distance needed to understand an original point.

Heidegger thought that this distance is the meaning of our transcendence. "For, in *transcendence*, the essence of the finitude of Dasein discloses itself as *freedom for reasons*. And so man, as existing transcendence abounding in an surpassing toward possibilities, is a *creature of distance*. Only through the primordial distance he establishes toward all being in his transcendence does a true nearness to things flourish in him".²¹ The distance is necessary here, since it is the way to face the given in Western tradition. The enigmatic inessentiality is recognizable from this distance in the way Heidegger focused himself mainly in defining the structure of experience without any type of transcendent substance and partly in a nihilist manner, which means an open experience surrounded by the *presence of the presented entities*, where our capacity to think and to perceive fulfills the dynamics of presence. The beyond is closer to our immediacy.

Only thus can thinking be awakened and called upon to take to heart the present, in respect of its presence. If that happens [...] it is still no assurance that such thinking will also clothe the presence of what is present, in words, with all possible clarity and in every respect. Even more, it remains undecided whether in the 'presence of what is present' there will appear That which constitutes the presence of what is present. It would be a mistake, then, for us to take the view that Being of beings meant merely, for all time, the presence of what is present.²²

Heidegger was uncertain that the phenomenon of the presence was forever the origin of thinking due to the fact that, from the beginning, thinking should have brought into words every aspect of clarity of presence. To speak about its truth is to discuss the possibility of naming all details of the presence forever, which I think is constrained by the *tradition of representation as an image of the world* that Heidegger in other texts tried to disentangle. As a consequence, Giorgio Agamben thought radically that there could be an act where the unity of the given could be restituted, but without writing or words. In this circumstance, God reestablishes its own potentiality by denying any predicate.

The interruption of writing marks the passage to the second creation, in which God summons all his potential not to be, creating on the basis of a point of indifference between potentiality and impotentiality. The creation that it is now fulfilled is neither a re-creation nor an eternal repetition; it is, rather, a decreation in which what happened and what did not happen are returned to their originary unity in the mind of God, while what could have been but was becomes indistinguishable from what could have been but was not.²³

²⁰Alain Badiou. "Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art". *Inästhetik* - Nr. 0, März (2008).

²¹Heidegger, *The Essence of Reasons*, 131.

²²Heidegger, *What is called Thinking?*, 236.

²³Agamben, *op.cit.*, 270.

The restitution of God's unity is where he has all his potentialities back as if the creation has taken from him his potentiality. From this perspective, there is no divine trace that conveys completely the power of God. Rather it conveys a limitation of divine power by the representation and existence of its attributes as if having a form would constrain the potentiality of the creator. The multiple forms, dimensions and unknown sides of the universe are partially a potentiality of God's loss as Agamben suggests. Thus it is through an interruption that the restitution may happen. This aptly follows Western thought in the division of phenomenon and representation. From this point of view there is no reality without representation. It is quite interesting that the stream of thinking in this tradition has arrived to the point of attributing a lack of potentiality to representation. Nonetheless it could be thought that all the names of God are expressions of its potentiality, counting as well that which signifies the interruption of God's action. Of course, God is not reducible to any of his predicates, because he is in essence unknown. It is not possible to attribute something to the *unmoved mover* as named by Aristotle, which makes everything that is, while actualizing it.

Evidently there is but one heaven. For if there are many heavens as there are many men, the moving principles, of which each heaven will have one, will be one in form but in number many. But all things that are many in number have matter; for one and the same definition, e.g. that of man, applies to many things, while Socrates is one. But the primary essence has not matter; for it is complete reality. So the unmovable first mover is one both in definition and in number; so too, therefore, is that which is moved always and continuously; therefore there is one heaven alone.²⁴

An unmoved mover, unity of the many and a represented unknown are contradictions in form, but arguably not in reality. This shows how a partial symbolic affirmation about nature or logic limits human perceptual scope before the given and, simultaneously, it is a proof that we need other language based on a different logic, in which the inessentiality of the given can be experienced in our common cultural environment. It may sound odd nowadays, but actually the whole cultural construction of human reality when taken as such is uncanny from a perspective beyond human normalization of experience. Thus, our manner to represent things has its own order, which has a dualistic method of development. Óscar Pujol in *La ilusión fecunda* describes, based on Indian philosophy, the duality always perceived by types of thinking, which project distinctions between perception and phenomena:

¿Cuáles serían estos dos elementos básicos de la llamada dualidad? En última instancia y para ser fieles al *acosmicismo* de Shánkara, esos dos elementos no existirían más allá de una mera proyección de la ignorancia. [...] Todo conocimiento es, por tanto, relacional, ya que une a un sujeto con un objeto, atributo o predicado. [...] El conocimiento relacional admite ser analizado mediante el *triputi*: el triángulo clásico de la epistemología india formado por el sujeto conocedor/perceptor, el objeto conocido/percebido y la relación, el conocimiento/percepción.²⁵

²⁴Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. (Kansas: DigiReads, 2009), 1074b, 136-137.

²⁵Óscar Pujol. *La ilusión fecunda*. (Valencia: Pre-Textos, 2015), 100. "Which would be these two basic elements of the so-called duality? In the last instance, and to follow Adi Shankara's *acosmology*, these two elements wouldn't exist beyond such a projection of ignorance. [...] Therefore every knowledge is relational, because it connects a subject with an object, attribute and predicate. [...] Relational knowledge allows being analyzed by means of the *triputi*: the classic triangle of Indian epistemology composed by the aware subject/receiver, the known object/perceived and the relation, the knowledge/perception" (Author's translation). *Acosmology* means "without

This *acosmology* means that another level of consciousness has been acquired. The unknown brings the beyond of our understanding before us and it is not a mirror like forms, but the entrance to another standpoint in a profounder consciousness of reality. The unmoved mover cannot interrupt its action, since it implies no action. It is the actuality of reality, where all times gather. All entities realize their forms through it, causing that cosmic movement has no parallel, since it realizes what it is. Our understanding happens as this movement occurs, because our thoughts do not duplicate reality; they just bring another dimension of the given as the force that makes things what they are expresses itself in the same unity, but no dimension implies the others.

We are not here and now because of our oblivion of the inessentiality of the given. This situation causes us to search desperately ourselves in different forms without realizing that there is no form necessary to be ourselves. Paradoxically, the remembrance of the essence brings us back here to the opening of the unknown. Meanwhile, a metaphysical distance is necessary to be closed to true reality. The problem of our time is the objective of symbolic representation of self-consciousness as a continuation of the same dynamics that cause human oblivion of presence. We have arrived to the point of believing that existence is produced through symbolic representations. The potential creation of a technological singularity, which performs human self-consciousness, has to replicate this intrinsic dynamics of presence, without which it would reach merely a scientific confirmation within an autoepistemic closure grounded on current human understanding: the verification of such enabled paradigms as an experimental outcome performs the closure of the hermeneutical circle from the set of possibilities already given in its representational language. A model of reality that does not face the inessentiality of the given only proves its prior definitions when experimenting and it does categorically make neither philosophy nor science.

The inessentiality of the given, which is *unrepresentable*, has been forgotten, just as the actual possibility of human freedom. The oblivion has two sides as normalization of symbolic representation of reality, and as the covering of the unknown. The remembrance of the essence means being present, because when remembering in this way we place us right before the present movement of the cosmos, which is creating reality. Nāgārjuna, a Buddhist monk from the 2nd century, believed that truth is not something to be sought, but to be created. Juan Arnau describes Nāgārjuna as someone who speaks with a new language.

Nāgārjuna [...] convierte su exégesis en un proyecto que institucionalizará una nueva manera de ser budista, y propone un nuevo juego del lenguaje en el que la verdad ya no es algo que se encuentra sino algo que se crea, algo que depende de manera directa de la imaginación, de la capacidad de reconocer el prodigio del mundo y de recrearse en su ilusión.²⁶

The remembrance of the essence is unity of idea and reality. It is not bringing something back through images, since this remembrance is a reconfiguration of the past that allows living things to persist in their existence, while embodying the force of being alive. Paradoxically, humans

cosmology”.

²⁶Juan Arnau. *La palabra frente al vacío*. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005), 222. “Nāgārjuna [...] converts his exegesis in a project, which will institutionalize a new way of being Buddhist, and he proposes a new game of language in which truth is not something that it is findable, but creatable, something that depends directly on imagination, on the capacity of acknowledge the prodigious of the world, and on recreating oneself in its illusion” (Author’s translation).

transcend themselves consciously by remembering the essence of the ever present moment, which is creating reality. A new language and logic have to emerge for the incoming movement of self-consciousness where another reality will be manifested from the same unknown field that has been here from the beginning of time.

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Correspondence: Julio Alcántara, e: julio.alcantara@egs.edu.

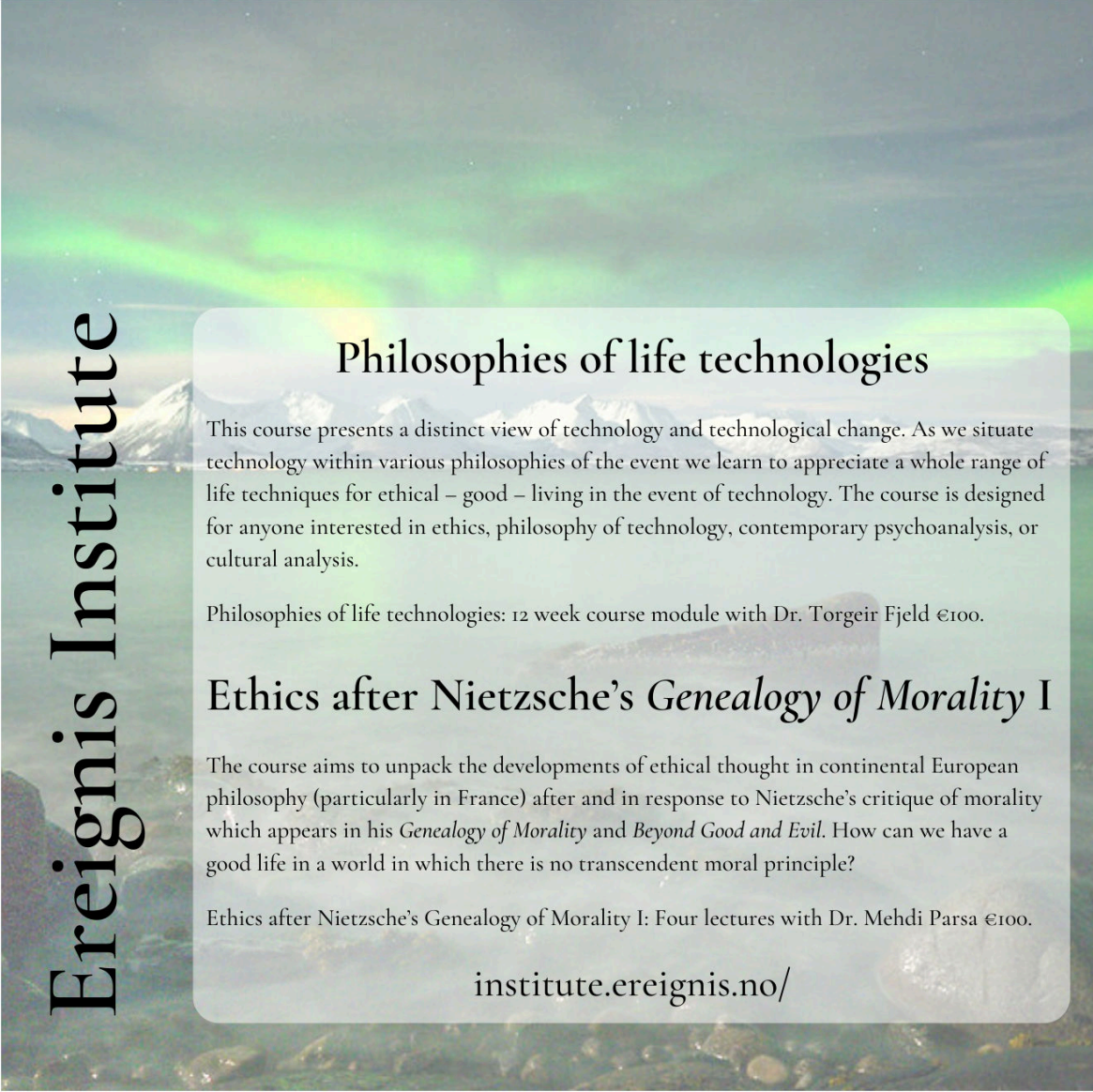
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